

For Stewards of Maryland's Backyard Wildlife

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Habichat
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Native Plant Profile

Backyard Damsels & Dragons

Moon (Moth) Gardens

Martin Magic



HABITAT - the arrangement of food, water, cover, and space **-IS THE KEY!** This newsletter is a place to share ideas, information, and help answer some of your habitat and wildlife gardening concerns.

We want to hear from you! Letters, e-mail, photos, drawings. Let us know how successful you are as you create wildlife habitat on your property.

Write to Me! Marilyn Mause, Wild Acres Program, DNR, Wildlife & Heritage Service, Gwynnbrook WMA, 3740 Gwynnbrook Ave, Owings Mills MD 21117, 410-356-0941. E-Mail: customerservice@dnr.state.md.us



Raspberry Flowers

Native Plant Profile.....Brambles (*Rubus spp.*)

Raspberries, blackberries, etc, comprise this group. Hardy, fast growing, usually thorny shrubs grow three to 10 feet. Found in old fields, pastures, clearings, and hedgerows in a variety of soils.



Flowers/Fruits: Usually white, blooming from May to June. Red or black fruits from June or July to September.

Landscape Uses: Best when used as living fences for property borders or naturalizing. Pruning maximizes fruit production. Fragrant thimbleberry (*Rubus odoratus*) is best for landscaping. It bears purple flowers May to September and tolerates shade.

Brambles provide food for: American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Common Flicker, Redbellied, Red-headed and Hairy woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Willow and Alder Flycatcher, Blue Jay, Common and Fish Crow, Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, Bobwhite Quail, Ring-necked Pheasant, Tufted Titmouse, Wood, Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrush, Veery, White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Orchard and Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet and Summer Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted and Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Rufous-sided Towhee, Henslow's, Field, White-throated, Fox, and Song Sparrow, Black Bear, Gray and Red Fox, Gray and Red Squirrels, White-footed Mouse, White-tailed Deer.

Brambles provide shelter for: Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Field, Fox and Song Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Ring-necked Pheasant, Willow and Alder Flycatcher, Mockingbird, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Veery, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat.

Brambles provide nesting places for: Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Field and Song Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Mockingbird, Willow and Alder Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat.

Additional Notes: Brambles as a group provide excellent escape cover for birds and rabbits with safe nesting sites for small birds. The berries top the list of summer fruits eaten by wildlife.

Moon (Moth) Gardens

Long before moths were drawn to electric lights or the flame of a candle they were drawn to the white flowers, which reflected the illumination of the moon and stars. If the coloring was not enough to coax night flying moths to their nectar a fragrance would lure them.



Flowering Tobacco
Nicotiana glauca

Much has been written on butterfly gardening but today's life styles have many working until late in the day and would still like to enjoy wildlife in their gardens. So why not try a moon (nocturnal) garden that benefits moths and looks and smells wonderful! Many plants bloom exclusively at night, with many more that wait until evening to release their scent. Plants with variegated foliage and white flowers glow softly as they reflect moonlight.

Long before moths were drawn to electric lights or the flame of a candle it was the white flowers, which reflected the illumination of the moon and stars. If the coloring was not enough to coax night flying moths to their nectar a fragrance could lure them.

Of the 11,000 species of Lepidoptera in North America only 756 are butterflies with the rest being moths. Moths have often gotten a bad reputation, only a small percentage of moths destroy plants or your wool clothes. Most moths are small, brown creatures. However some have spots, bands of color and interesting shapes to rival butterflies. The best way to tell butterflies and moths apart is to look at the antennae. Butterflies have thread like antennae with a tiny knob at the tip. Moths' antennae are plumed or feathery. Male moths use the feathery antennae to catch the scent of females.

Moths and butterflies both go through a metamorphosis of several stages: caterpillar, or larvae then adult. Throughout the night adult moths search for mates or go from flower to flower to sip nectar. Flowers that attract moths often have a long tubular throat to accommodate the moth's lengthy proboscis. While a flower is serving the moth its meal the moth is helping to pollinate the plants.

When constructing a moon (moth) garden consider what part of your garden would be the most accessible or visible in the evening. You might want to pick a section near your deck or patio where you would probably be in the evening, so consider comfortable seating near the garden and some extra lighting when there are moonless nights.

One of the top night bloomers is the moon vine (*Ipomoea alba*). The moon vine is a member of the morning glory family. Pure white trumpet flowers open every night just at sunset with a wonderful fragrance.

An old fashion plant for the night garden is one of the native flowering tobaccos (*Nicotiana glauca*). It can grow 3'-5' tall. The flowers are fragrant in the evening and are in clusters of 3" trumpets.

Moon (Moth) Gardens can't

Evening primrose (*Oenothera*), although not white are night blooming with a sweet fragrance. Try the yellow *Oenothera biennis* and the pink *Oenothera speciosa*.

Easily grown are the Four O' Clocks (*Mirabilis*) they begin to bloom in the late afternoon. *Mirabilis jalapa*s give off a jasmine –like scent. These flowers are white, pink, rose, orange and yellow and are very easy to establish and also look nice in daylight hours.

Also include plants that glow in the moonlight. There are many choices of white blooming or silver foliated plants to choose from. Some that are also wildlife friendly include candytuft, white bleeding heart, lilies, especially calla lilies, petunias and phlox; the Midnight Candy variety releases a honey-almond-vanilla fragrance. Shrubs include white azaleas, mock orange, viburnum, fringe trees, lilac, sweet bay and white roses. Annuals to try in white are cosmos, Dianthus and zinnias. Silver to white foliated plants for your garden are Dusty Miller, silver thyme and lamb's ear.

Consider a houseplant that outdoors for the summer. The night blooming cereus, an old fashion houseplant, is a vining succulent. Flower buds are along the edge of the leaf. The flowers are enormous, 7" or more across, night blooming and fragrant.

Night Gladiolus (*Gladiolus tristis*) features creamy yellow blossoms that produce an intense spicy smell. Fragrant Columbine (*Aquilegia fragrans*) has a rich honeysuckle scent with creamy white flowers. Pinks (*Dianthus plumarius*) have pale pink flowers with a clove scent. Another vine to try besides moon vine is the sweet autumn clematis (*Clematis paniculata*).

Your night garden does not have to be limited to flowers. Try the following vegetables and herbs: silver thyme, white egg plant, "Boo" white pumpkins, white basil and oregano.

With these moth friendly plants, hopefully you will have moths such as the hawk or sphinx moths, some of which are known as hummingbird moths, which are seen in the day hovering over the plants.



Cecropia Moth

Some of the most beautiful species are the giant silk moths, Cecropia as well as the Luna. They range from deep browns, bright oranges to glowing greens. Because these moths lack mouth parts as adults, they cannot feed, and they live for a few days long enough to mate. So to bring giant silks to your moth garden be sure to grow nearby plants used by their larvae. Sassafras, wild cherry, blueberries, dogwood, oaks, hickories, willows and the tulip tree especially for the lovely Promethea are the ones to plant and are beneficial for wildlife in general.

For an excellent id source for moths in Maryland try the USGS Moths of America web site:
www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/moths/mothusa.htm



Calopterygidae calopteryx sp

Backyard Damsels and Dragons

With nicknames like devil's darning needle and a reputation for sewing up the ears and eyes of naughty children, dragonflies and damselflies look like they should bite or do something nasty. These beneficial insects do have voracious appetites, but it's mosquitoes that top their menu.

Just about any pond or stream will have dragonflies and damselflies hovering, darting or basking nearby. But don't be surprised if you spy a dragonfly or damselfly gracing the flower garden, even if the nearest pond or stream is over a mile away. Female dragonflies sometimes will feed and roost far from the nearest source of permanent water. With their vivid metallic colors and gauzy wings, watching dragonfly antics can be as interesting as birds, particularly if you have a water garden. Then you can watch the real reason females wing it to the uplands.

Males can be seen guarding coveted territories down at the pond. Many species of dragonflies engage in an interesting behavior called "mate guarding". When the females arrive the males fight each other to be the last male to mate with the female before she lays her eggs. The eggs are most likely fertilized by the last male. Good mate guards can keep other males away. Some will still clasp the female even when she dives underwater to lay her eggs. Successful mate guards also benefit the female because without him, she might not ever be able to finish laying her eggs.



Argia alberta

For more information on these fascinating insects check out the following:

www.geocities.com/howardbirds/Howard/hocodrag.htm

This is a check list of dragon flies and related species found in central Maryland. It also provides links to other related dragonfly sites.

Dragonflies and damselflies belong to the insect order *Odonata*. There are about 450 species in North America. Some species migrate or hibernate. It is fairly easy to tell the two apart. Dragonflies have thick bodies, are strong fliers, and hold their wings out while basking in the sun. Damselflies are thin-bodied and hold their wings parallel to their body.

You can create habitat for them by building a water garden or backyard pond and they're one of the first species to colonize new ponds. Dragonflies lay thousands of eggs in or near water on the leaves and stems of aquatic plants. The nymphs may spend from one to four years underwater before they become adults. Small nymphs eat microscopic organisms and small insects such as mosquito larva. Larger nymphs eat minnows and tadpoles. Fish, salamanders, and turtles also eat nymphs.

One of the things that make dragonflies stand out is that they have excellent vision. Their compound eyes contain 28,000 facets whereas a housefly has only 4,000.



Purple Martin colony with different types of housing

Martin Magic!

Every spring many look forward to the return of Purple Martins from their wintering grounds in Brazil. Soaring, swooping, and circling like acrobats, their gurgling and clicking chatter is the first signal of their arrival. The male "scouts" arrive first, followed a week or so later by the rest of the colony.

Purple martins prefer to use the same houses as the year before, but if those sites are gone, they will seek other houses nearby. Martins nest almost exclusively in man-made structures and are now dependent on man for its survival. Early spring is the time to set up houses for martins.

The Native Americans discovered the benefit of attracting martins hundred of years ago and hung dried gourds for use as nesting sites. Martins, who once utilized abandoned woodpecker nests, now will nest in dried gourds, plastic gourds, and wood or metal housing, as the cutting of dead timber for firewood has reduced the number of abandoned woodpecker holes.



Martins are voracious eaters of flying insects. Studies have found that one martin is capable of eating up to 2,000 insects a day. Multiply that by the 150 days that martins stay in our area, one martin can rid your yard of 300,000 annoying insects. Twelve pairs nesting in one aluminum martin house, each pair raising an average of 5 fledglings per pair, a potential 25.2 million insects can be removed from your wildlife acre in one summer.

Martin's enthusiasts generally put up structures that will house 8 to 24 nesting pairs. The best house is an aluminum style erected on a telescoping pole or lanyard system which is 14' high, placed in an open area where the martins have plenty of room to swoop and circle around. An open body of water within ¼ mile of the house is usually necessary.

Martin Magic con't

An aluminum house is cooler in hot weather, last many years, doesn't need painting, is not prone to parasite infestation or Starling invasion, and is easy to clean. With a telescopic pole or lanyard system you can raise and lower the house regularly for removal of house sparrow nests. An added benefit to this type of house is that you and your family can monitor the number of eggs laid by the martins and watch the growth of the babies until they fledge. This is an exciting and educational treat for children.

House Sparrows will attempt to take over new martin houses. House Sparrows will also attack an adult bird as it sits on its nest. Peck holes in their eggs, and toss any hatchlings out the door. If you are interested in becoming a martin landlord, please do not erect any martin structures unless you are committed to protecting them from House Sparrows!

Martins begin nest building by mid-May, eggs are laid in June, and most of the young have hatched by July. When the last youngster has fledged, usually by the end of August, the colony will suddenly disappear. They will have begun their return journey to South America. It will be next early April before you will find yourself listening for that loud and sprightly, "EEE-ER-EEE-ER" which signals the martin return.

For tips on Martin land lording, check out the following:

www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wamartins.asp

This is the Maryland Wild Acres information sheet on how to build and maintain a purple martin box

www.purplemartin.com

The web site for the Purple Martin Society with detailed information on the birds, boxes, arrival dates, etc.

www.purplemartin.org

The web site for the Purple Martin Conservation Association which provides information and research on the birds.

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 - Photo of Purple Martin Bird House courtesy of Bill French, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Photo of Cecropia Moth (*Hyalophora cecropia* (Linnaeus), courtesy of Lacy L. Hyche, Auburn University, www.insectimages.org Photo UGA1430172.
 - Photo of Odonata: *Calopterygidae calopteryx* sp courtesy of John Wallace, North American Benthological Society
 - Photo of *Argia alberta* by Richard Wiegand
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Here is a listing of phone numbers, web sites and organizations that you might find helpful or interesting in your search for ideas to manage your wild acres. **DNR Online...** Inspired by nature!
www.dnr.maryland.gov

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the highest numbers of each species they see at their feeders from November through early April. FeederWatch helps scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in partnership with the National Audubon Society, Bird Studies Canada, and Canadian Nature Federation. <http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw>

National Wildlife Federation - Details on their backyard habitat program www.nwf.org or call them at 1-800-822-9919.

Native plants - **The Maryland Native Plant Society** offers information dedicated to protecting, conserving and restoring Maryland's native plants and habitats, visit them at www.mdflora.org.

Maryland Cooperative Extension offers home and garden information, tips publications, plant problems, Bay issues, and other links at www.agnr.umd.edu/MCE/index.cfm Their **Home and Garden Information** number is statewide and can be reached at 1-800-342-2507, and from outside Maryland at 1-410-531-1757.

Maryland's "**Becoming an Outdoors - Woman Program**" - One of the topics covered in the three-day workshops is Backyard Wildlife. For more information on this program contact Karina Blizzard at 410-260-8559 or send e-mail to: kblizzard@dnr.state.md.us.

For a free wildlife & native plant newsletter, visit the **WindStar Wildlife Institute** at www.windstar.org and subscribe to the WindStar Wildlife Garden Weekly e-newsletter. You can also visit this website to learn how you can become a certified wildlife habitat naturalist.

For more information on butterflies - visit the **North American Butterfly Association** at www.naba.org

Warm season grasses and wild meadows for upland nesting birds visit **Pheasants Forever** at www.pheasantsforever.org
or e-mail: pf@pheasantsforever.org



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